

RETURN OF THE BULLY

TEACHER'S NOTES

A Synopsis of the play

'Return of the Bully' was written with the intention to offer strategies to help children deal with being bullied at school. The play is performed by two actors who play three different characters. Poppy is a 'year four' girl who is being bullied by Alex a 'year five' boy. One afternoon as she is hiding from Alex in the drama room, she meets Jo the school karate teacher. The play concentrates on the relationship between Jo and Poppy as she agrees to become his student so that she can learn all he knows about how to stop a bully.

Jo takes his job as a karate teacher very seriously but he won't teach Poppy the skills of karate until she learns how to deal with Alex who is bullying her. Jo tells Poppy the first secret of the bully is 'you can't beat a bully at being a bully'. Poppy must learn other ways rather than fighting to stop her problem. She agrees to learn what Jo has to teach and becomes his pupil in pure 'karate kid' style. Jo tells Poppy that as they work through the strategies of dealing with a bully that she must try them out on Alex and at times enlist the help of children from the audience to workshop the ideas.

At the end of the play Poppy passes her bully course with flying colours only to realize that all this information is readily available at school libraries or on web sites. However Jo still has one skill left to teach her that she will need to attend classes for and that is karate. Poppy agrees to learn karate for fitness and fun because she doesn't need to defend herself with her fists as she has learned other ways to stop being bullied in her life.

Questions about the play

1. Why is Poppy hiding in the beginning of the play?
2. What does Jo teach?

3. Why won't Jo teach Poppy karate if she wants to use the skills for revenge against Alex?
4. What happened to Poppy when she tried to fight with Alex?
5. Jo tells Poppy that the first secret of the bully is 'you can't beat a bully at being a bully'. What does this mean?
6. Why are bullies always better at bullying than nice children?
7. Jo tells Poppy the three secrets of the bully which are: 1. 'You can't beat a bully at being a bully'. 2. 'Bullies want a reaction'. 3. 'Bullies feel tall by making you feel small'. Explain what you think these secrets mean.
8. Throughout the play Jo teaches Poppy the six strategies to stop bullies. Below is a list of the strategies.

Strategy 1.

How do you stand?

Strategy 2.

Don't react.

Strategy 3.

Don't argue just agree.

Strategy 4.

Don't throw stones.

Strategy 5

Block their path.

Strategy 6

The secret weapon; the journal.

Please give a short summary of what you think these strategies mean and how they would help you if you were being bullied.

9. When Poppy tells Jo that Alex bullies her when she is by herself he tells her not to be shy and play with the other children at lunch time. How would this help Poppy to stop Alex bullying her?
10. When Jo tells Poppy to use strategy number three 'don't argue just agree' she asks if that would mean that she wouldn't be sticking up for herself. What does Jo say to prove you can avoid arguments without letting yourself be put down?
11. Poppy says that not fighting is hard sometimes. What kind of arguments do you think are not worth fighting?
12. Jo asks a child from the audience to do the 'don't throw stones quiz'. Below are the questions. How do you score?
 - Are you mean to other kids?
 - Do you leave kids out of the games?
 - Do you talk about people behind their backs in a nasty way?
 - Do you lie to your teachers?
 - Are you rude to your friends parents?
 - Do you put your feet on the table?
 - Walk on the furniture?
 - Not tell them if you spilt something on the rug?
 - Are you a bad sport when you loose at games?

The point of the quiz is to find out if you treat your friends, family and teachers nicely. Explain how being a good and fair person would make it harder for a bully to bully you.

13. What does Jo tell Poppy when she asks where he got all his information on bullying?
14. Where would you go to find out more information about bullying?
15. It's very important to tell someone if you are being bullied. If you were being bullied who would you tell.

Drama Improvisations

During the play children are invited to participate in a couple of improvisations. Below are the two improvisations to try out in class.

Improvisation 1.

Strategy Number three is called 'don't argue just agree'. Act out ridiculous arguments and try and involve each other. The trick on the part of the person who doesn't want to be drawn in to the argument is to answer in ways that will extinguish the situation. Here are a few examples of responses that can be used.

- If you say so.
- I can't argue with that.
- That's a pretty strong argument.
- Who would have thought all that could happen.
- I understand how it could look like that.
- I have nothing to say.
- That's a pretty good point.
- I'll have to get back to you on that.
- We disagree and that's okay.

Improvisation 2.

Act out a quiz with a host and assistant asking the questions and contestants who buzz in to answer. The idea behind the 'don't throw stones' quiz is to find out if you are 'bully proof' through how you treat people in your life. For example if you are accused wrongly of stealing something and you are a very honest person, people will believe you when you say it's not true. But if you are known as someone who steals it will be harder to believe that you are innocent. The quiz is a way of checking that you are treating people with respect.

Drama Trust Exercises

Through these drama exercises the children can explore what trust is and how it feels.

Exercise 1

Break the class into groups of about six children. Have all the children stand in a tight circle with one child inside. The child inside can fall and then be caught by the children in the circle. The child in the middle is then pushed gently from one child to the other around the circle keeping their feet central and their body straight but having no control over which direction they are pushed in.

Exercise 2.

The children can be organized into pairs. One child can wear a blindfold and then the other child can lead them from one end of the room to the other. The children can take turns and both have a go at leading and being blind folded.

General Discussion

Here are some good topics to discuss after the play.

- Are you a bully if you stand by and watch someone being hurt without helping.

- If everybody helps each other at school what kind of place would it be?
- What do you think about the older children looking after the younger children at school? As in peer support.
- There are many different types of bullying. Discuss what you think the types are.

The End